Festivals of Bhutan
Thimphu Tsechu, Gangtey Tsechu and Thangbi Mani

September 24–October 6, 2020

Explore Bhutan during the colorful festival season. Tsechus are religious festivals where masked dances are performed to instruct the onlookers in the ways of dharma and to honor Padmasambava, considered the founder of Buddhism. The performances are held in the morning leaving afternoons for sightseeing. We visit monasteries, sacred sites, bazaars, small villages, enjoying the breath-taking Himalayas and local culture.

Sep 24 Day 1: Morning arrival in Paro–Drive to Thimphu
Dep Bangkok 0650, Arr 0950 or Dep Kathmandu 0845, arrive Paro 1020. (schedule subject to change)

The flight to Paro is a mountain flight and as you approach Paro, you will have great views of many of the mighty Himalayan peaks including Everest.

Met at airport and a one hour drive through the hamlets of Paro along the riverside to Thimphu the capital city of Bhutan.

Lying at an elevation of 2320m (7600 feet) above sea level, the capital of Bhutan is a blend of the traditional and the modern. It is the only capital in the world without streetlights, relying instead on the elegant gestures of the traffic policemen. The population of Thimphu stands at around 40,000. Geographically, the capital lies in a valley with the Thimphu River running through it. You will notice a stark difference in lifestyle, architecture and the unique Bhutanese customs. Men and women dress in their traditional attire. The men wear the ‘Gho’ and women the ‘Kira.’

On the drive we will pass the Tamchog Lhakhang, built by Thangtong Gyalpo (iron bridge builder/saint from the 14th-15th century who introduced the art of building suspension bridges with iron chains). There is an orange tree in the courtyard that bears fruit due to the blessings of the saint and monastery (oranges are not native to that region). We pass Chuzom (meeting of the rivers or confluence). Bhutanese believe that evil influences gather at such places and hence three shrines have been built on this spot. The shrines have been built in three different styles- Nepali, Tibetan and Bhutanese.

Just 6 km before arrival into Thimphu, you will stop to visit the 17th century Simtokha Dzong standing on a lofty ridge. Built by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1627, it is one of the first Dzongs in the country. The site is said to have been chosen to guard over a demoness that had vanished into the rock nearby, hence the name Simtokha (‘sinmo’ meaning demoness and ‘do’ meaning stone. It now houses the school for Buddhist studies.

On arrival in Thimphu, check into the hotel and lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon we shall visit the Textile Museum, inaugurated by her Majesty Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck. This museum showcases the traditional attire worn in the different parts of Bhutan and also during the festivals. The ground floor of the Textile Museum displays skills of making cloth such as spinning, coloring fibers, preparing a loom, and manipulating two sets of yarns. It also displays decorative fabrics produced by Bhutanese weavers that can be used for several uses such as clothing, ceremonies and blankets. Various textile arts and crafts are categorically displayed in the galleries situated on the first floor. The highlights here include traditional regional garments and masterpieces produced by women and men. Women are the chief weavers in the household and men mostly embroider and appliqué fabrics for sacred and ceremonial use.

From here we go to the Weaving Center run by one of the few male weavers, Mr. Kesang Lhendup. The center showcases the different weaving styles and woven patterns of Bhutan and also the different types of yarns and vegetables dyes used.

Sep 25 Day 2: Thimphu Full Day Tour
Visit the National Memorial Chorten of the 3rd King of Bhutan. This chorten, built in 1974 to honor the 3rd King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1928–1972), is a prominent landmark in the city with its golden spires and bells. In 2008, it underwent extensive renovation. It is popularly known as ‘the most visible religious landmark in Bhutan. Large stupas are usually the place for older folks to walk around and socialize. You will see many people walking around the stupa and spinning prayer wheels.
We'll attend the Thimphu Tseschu again this morning and have lunch in Thimphu.

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The Thimphu Festival, the oldest temple in Thimphu -built in 12th century (was last renovated in 1998). It hovers over a ridge above Thimphu, near Motithang. Lama Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo who came to Bhutan from Ralung in Tibet chose this site to build this Lhakhang. The Lhakhang houses Chenrizig: an 11-headed, thousand-armed manifestation of Avalokiteshvara as the central statue. The prayer books in this Lhakhang are larger than the usual Buddhist texts. There are enormous prayer wheels inside the Lhakhang and small ones on the walls outside the Lhakhang. Enjoy the excellent view from the courtyard.

This afternoon, tour the city including visits to the Folk Heritage Museum, the School of Traditional Arts and Crafts and National Institute of Traditional Medicine. We will continue tomorrow visiting any places we do not get to today.

The Folk Heritage Museum, official name Phelchey Toenkyim, was inaugurated by Her Majesty, the Queen Ashi Dorji Wangchuck on 28th July 2001. The museum provides a glimpse of lifestyle, items and artifacts of Bhutanese villages and rural households. Besides the display, the museum also organizes demonstrations of rural traditions, skills, habits and customs, educational programs for children and research and documentation on rural life of Bhutan. The museum building itself is one of the star exhibits of the library. It is a restored three-storey traditional rammed mud and timber house that resembles the average rural household in the Wang area during the mid-19th century, complete with typical household objects, domestic tools and equipments that were used by rural families of that period. The age of the building proves how durable and long lasting, the building materials used in those times, were. The activities of the museum follow a seasonal rhythm, just like the activities of a true rural household, offering you something new to see, every time you visit. The rural setting and flavor has been well-preserved and you can see paddy, wheat and millet fields here, a traditional water-mill with mill stones more than 150 years old, traditional style kitchen gardens with vegetables that were grown over the past 100 years and the famous traditional hot stone bath. Native trees and plants that had domestic uses in Bhutanese rural household are being grown here in an effort to keep indigenous knowledge about the use of natural resources alive and have a patch of greenery, right in the heart of the capital city.

The School of Traditional Arts and Crafts

In Bhutan, the traditional arts are known as zorig chusum (zo = the ability to make; rig = science or craft; chusum = thirteen). These practices have been gradually developed through the centuries, often passed down through families with long-standing relationships to a particular craft. These traditional crafts represent hundreds of years of knowledge and ability that has been passed down through generations.

The great 15th century treasure finder (tertön), Pema Lingpa is traditionally credited with introducing the arts into Bhutan. In 1680, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal ordered the establishment of the school for instruction in the 13 traditional arts. Although the skills existed much earlier, it is believed that the zorig chusum was first formally categorized during the rule of Tenzin Rabgye (1680-1694), the 4th Druk Desi (secular ruler). The thirteen traditional arts are

- **Deko** - Paper Making: Handmade paper made mainly from the Daphne plant and gum from a creeper root.
- **Dzoek - Stonework**: Stone art used in the construction of stone pools and the outer walls of dzongs, goenpa (monasteries), stupas, and some other buildings.
- **Garzo - Blacksmithing**: The manufacture of iron goods, such as farm tools, knives, swords, and utensils.
- **Jinzo - Clay arts**: The making of religious statues and ritual objects, pottery and the construction of buildings using mortar, plaster, and rammed earth.
- **Lhazo - Painting**: From the images on thangkas (religious wall hangings), walls paintings, and statues to the decorations on furniture and window-frames.
- **Lugzo - Bronze casting**: Production of bronze roof-crests, statues, bells, and ritual instruments, in addition to jewelry and household items using sand casting and lost-wax casting. Larger statues are made by repoussé.
- **Parzo - Wood, slate, and stone carving**: In wood, slate or stone, for making such items as printing blocks for religious texts, masks, furniture, altars, and the slate images adorning many shrines and altars.
- **Shagezo - Woodturning**: Making a variety of bowls, plates, cups, and other containers.
- **Shingzo - Woodworking**: Employed in the construction of dzongs and goenpa (monasteries)
- **Thagezo - Weaving**: The production of some of the most intricately woven fabrics produced in Asia.
- **Trezo - Silver and Goldsmithing**: Working in gold, silver, and copper to make jewelry, ritual objects, and utilitarian household items.
- **Tibazo - Cane and Bamboo Work**: The production of such varied items as bows and arrows, baskets, drinks containers, utensils, musical instruments, fences, and mats.
- **Tshenazo - Needlework**: Working with needle and thread to make clothes, boots, or the most intricate of appliqué thangkas (religious wall hangings).

**Sep 26 Day 3: Thimphu – Thimphu Tseschu**

Early morning attend the first day of the sacred Thimphu Festival, where dances are performed by monks and secular people.

Next, we visit Changangkha Lhakhang, the oldest temple in Thimphu - built in 12th century (was last renovated in 1998). It hovers over a ridge above Thimphu, near Motithang. Lama Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo who came to Bhutan from Ralung in Tibet chose this site to build this Lhakhang. The Lhakhang houses Chenrizig: an 11-headed, thousand-armed manifestation of Avalokiteshvara as the central statue. The prayer books in this Lhakhang are larger than the usual Buddhist texts. There are enormous prayer wheels inside the Lhakhang and small ones on the walls outside the Lhakhang. Enjoy the excellent view from the courtyard.

**Sep 27 Day 4: Thimphu – Punakha**

We’ll attend the Thimphu Tseschu again this morning and have lunch in Thimphu.
After lunch, we drive (3 hrs/77 kms) to Punakha via the Dochula Pass (3050m). After an hour, we arrive at Dochula. This is a beautiful spot, but can be windy or foggy at times. If weather is clear, you can see the snow-capped Himalayan Range. There are 108 stupas built by the queen for the well being of the country. Stop here for a cup of tea and enjoy the spectacular view of the eastern Himalayan Mountain Ranges (on a clear day).

The road then descends through pine forests, blooming rhododendrons and beautiful terraced rice fields. We arrive into Punakha, the old capital of Bhutan and the winter residence for the Central Monastic Body. The magnificent Dzong is situated on an island in the middle of the river. On arrival, check-in and explore the town.

**Sep 28: Punakha– Gangtey (Phobjikha Valley) (drive time: 3 hrs)**

This morning, a visit to the Punakha Dzong (also known as Pungtang Dechen Photrang Dzong) meaning ‘the palace of great happiness or bliss’. Constructed by Zhabdrung (Shabdung) Ngawang Namgyal on the 8th day and 8th month of the Fire ox year in 1673, it is the second oldest and second largest dzong in Bhutan and one of its most majestic structures.

The three-story Machhen Lhakhang is a fine example of traditional architecture, crafted from cypress with four intricately embossed entrance pillars decorated in gold and silver, the inside walls are covered with elaborate murals depicting the teaching of the Buddha. The Chorten contains the Kudung and is adorned with precious jewels. It took twenty craftsmen four years to construct.

Punakha Dzong was the administrative center and the seat of the Government of Bhutan until 1955, when the capital was moved to Thimphu. It has undergone flooding from a glacial lake high above in the mountains of Lunana, which periodically has broken through its barriers; and has been ravaged by fire, but has stood on its remarkable site since the 17th C. The flash flood of October 1994 caused a great deal of damage, but miraculous spared the statue of Lord Buddha.

After the visit, we drive to Phobjikha Valley, a glacial valley located on the western slopes of the Black Mountain at an altitude of 9840 feet above the sea level. It is the winter home to the rare black-necked crane that migrate from high plateaus of Tibet in late fall to escape harsh winters. There are also muntjak (barking deer), wild boar, sambar, Himalayan black bear, leopard and red fox. The valley is a designated conservation area and borders Black Mountain National Park. This valley is one of the most beautiful spots in Bhutan.

Just before entering the valley we stop for lunch at a mid-way point called Nobding. Then, we cross a small pass and descend into Gangtey town. Our hotel is about 30 minutes further into the valley.

Road construction is finally complete, so the once bumpy roads to the entrance of the valley are now smooth. and then another 30 min to an hour to Gangtey, a beautiful village at an altitude of 3000m.

**Sep 29 Day 6: Gangtey (Gangtey Tsechu)**

This morning attend the first day of Gangtey Festival starting at 9 am in the courtyard of the Gangtey Monastery (Goempa in Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan), perched atop a small hill. We will stay for 1-2 hours. This tsechu features a special blessing ritual for devotees called Nguedup Langwa (receiving of spiritual wisdom). These dances, banned in Tibet, are the focal point of all the tsechus. The dances are dramatizations of incidences from the life of the 9th century Nyingmapa teacher Padmasambhava. At the festival, dances are performed that are banned in Tibet.

Afterwards we’ll visit Gangtey Goempa. It is one of the oldest and most important seats of the Nyingmapa school of Buddhism, dating to 17th century and associated with renowned teacher Terton Pema Lingpa. Gyalse Pema Trinlay built a small temple in 1613, which was later built into the larger Gompa by the 2nd reincarnation Tenzin Legpai Dhondrup in the form of a dzong. Ten monks reside at the monastery.

The monastery is surrounded by a large village mainly inhabited by the families of the 140 Gomchens who take care of the monastery.

We then enjoy a walk, carrying picnic lunch. We will drive 5 minutes to the entrance of the town. The walk starts from the mani stone wall just north of and above Gangtey Goempa. The trail descends through flower meadows to Semchubara village and into an open valley past the chortens into the edge of the forest before descending to a square Chorten and the Khewang Lhakhang and village. Walk around the village, interact with the local people. This will be an opportunity for us to come in closer contact with the local folks, observing their way of living. The trail ends by the meandering Chhu Nap (Blak River). From here we cross over the metal bridge to the community school. The car will be waiting for us here.

We will then drive ten minutes to the Black Necked Crane Information Centre located on the edge of the forest and wetland along the main road of Phobjikha Valley. It has an observation room equipped with high power telescope and spotting scopes for catching the best view of the cranes. The centre also offers display information that outlines the natural and cultural history of the area. There is a small gift shop, which sells handicrafts produced by the local people that local people can benefit from ecotourism.
Return to our hotel, approx. 10 minutes drive. The rest of the afternoon is independent. Relax and enjoy the delightful surroundings of Phobjikha Valley.

**Sep 30 Day 7: Gangtsey– Trongsa (120 km, 5 hrs)**

We depart at 8:30 am to Trongsa over Pele La pass (3,420m) on the Black Mountain range. En-route we visit the beautiful Chendebji Chorten a stone Buddhist monument in the Nepalese style (modeled after the Swayambunath Stupa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Kathmandu). It is built in a style unusual for Bhutan, with painted eyes facing the four directions. The Chorten was erected in the 18th century by a Tibetan lama to cover the remains of an evil spirit that was subdued at this spot. The imposing Trongsa Dzong can be viewed across a deep canyon to signal your approach to the town around a curving road. Trongsa is the ancestral home of Bhutan's ruling dynasty.

After hotel check-in, we have lunch and then visit Trongsa Dzong, a masterpiece of Bhutanese architecture and the largest Dzong in Bhutan. It is the location where the institution of monarchy in Bhutan began. The foundations of Trongsa Dzong were laid in the 16th Century and there are now 22 temples in the complex. The view from the Dzong is spectacular and one can see across the impressive landscape for many miles.

Also visit the Ta Dzong Museum housing an incredible collection of historical artifacts of the Royal Family and a range of traditional armor.

**Oct 1 Day 8: Trongsa - Bumthang (Jakar) (68 km, 2.5-3 hrs)**

This morning we enjoy a pleasant drive to Bumthang one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the spiritual and historical heartland of the country. The road winds steeply up to Yo Yutung La Pass (3,400m) before descending down through dense coniferous forest to Chhumey Valley.

En-route, we'll visit the Chummey weavers' workshop (at the beginning of the only straight road in Bhutan!). Here you can see example of Bumthang's noted textiles. Some of the most popular are Mathra, a deep wine and dark green plaid fine wool, nowadays made into colorful scarves, bags, blankets and sweaters and Yathra weaving – a delightfully woven embroidered cloth.

Bumthang is often called the cultural and religious heartland of Bhutan. As Buddhism was first introduced in Bhutan via Bumthang, this place abounds with religious as well as beautiful sites. The valley's barley fields, apple groves and meadows lay below huge hills that climb up towards the Himalayan mountain wall separating Bhutan from Tibet. The beautiful architecture unique to Bhutan is evident in the many large farmhouses and temples. Bumthang is associated with Guru Rimpoch (Padmasambhava) and with Terton Pemalingpa.

This afternoon we'll tour the historical Jakar Dzong built by Minjur Tenpa, the third Druk Desi (Temporal ruler appointed by Shabdrung) in 1646 A.D. It is probably one of the biggest Dzongs in Bhutan with the surrounding walls about 1 km. in circumference.

In the evening, visit The Burning Lake, also known as Membar Tsho, a pool where the Guru Padmasambhava hid a treasure. Pema Lingpa, a reincarnated disciple of the Guru, found the treasure - a sacred text that he translated, and which indicated he should return to the place. Since the local governor was skeptical about it, Pema Lingpa held a butter lamp in his hand, told the crowd that he would only return with the treasures with the lamp still burning if he was right. He jumped into the pool, remained under water for a long time, but when he resurfaced, he was not only holding another treasure in his hand, but also a still burning butter lamp - hence the name Burning Lake.

Overnight in Bumthang.

**Oct 2 Day 9: Bumthang – Thangbi Mani Festival**

We'll have an early breakfast and then go to Choekhor Village to observe Thangbi Mani Festival held at Tamshing Monastery. The Tamshing Lhakhang (temple of the good message), built in 1501 by Pema Lingpa, is the most important Nyingmapa temple in the kingdom and follows the Pelling tradition of Pema Lingpa. It is headed by the Venerable Lhalung Sungrul Rimpoch, the 11th direct incarnation of Pema Lingpa.

Festival deities are invoked through benediction and luck is increased and misfortune gone. We are captivated by clapping cymbals, drums, horns and the unforgettable chanting of Buddhist monks who perform religious dances of purification. Watch for the Atsara (clown) this dancer, unique in his own style, mimics dancers and entertains onlookers.

This afternoon tour the sites of Bumthang.

Visit Chakhar (Iron Castle) Lhakhang, the site of the palace of the Indian King Sindhu Raja who invited Guru Rimpoch to Bumthang. The original palace was made of iron and hence the name Chakhar. The saint Dorji Lingpa built the current building in 14th century. Its correct name is Dechen Phodrang.

We visit several ancient and important monasteries including Kurje Lhakhang, Kencho Sum Lhakhang, and Pema Samba Lhakhangs. Kurje Lhakhang named after a body print of Guru Rimpoche, built in 1652 by Minjur Tempa; and Jambay Lhakhang, built by King Srongsen Gampo of Tibet in the year 659 on the same day as Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro. The temple was visited by Guru Rimpoche during his visit to Bumthang and was renovated by Sindhu Raja after Guru Rimpoche restored his life force. Under the temple is said to be a lake in which Guru Rimpoche hid several Terma.
**Oct 3** Day 10: Bumthang-Ura-Bumthang (50 km, 2.5 hrs each way)
Today we will venture off the usual tourist route to visit the isolated village of Ura in the beautiful central valley. It is a 48 km/approx 1.5 hr drive. The road climbs through amazingly open countryside, only occasionally running into forest. Sheep pastures line the road up to 20 km. behind the southern tip of the Tang Valley. The road crosses Ura-la pass (3,600m), on the approach to which there is a magnificent view of Mt. Gangkar Puensum. Villages in Ura have clustered houses, which is quite unusual in Bhutan.

Above Ura village (3,100m) there is a new temple is dedicated to Guru Rimpoch. Inaugurated in 1986, it contains a huge statue of the Guru and remarkable wall paintings of the cycle of his teachings. Within the last 25 years Ura has been transformed from a marginal community to a prosperous valley. We shall arrange a meeting with a lama as well as a visit to a local school.

**Oct 4** Day 11: Fly to Paro
Transfer to the airport for the flight to Paro KB 1001, dep 12:45, arrives 13:20. Please note: if this flight is cancelled due to weather conditions, we will drive to Paro (approx. 9-10 hours on a new smooth road). We’ll take breaks of course.

Paro lies at an altitude of 2280m (7500 feet) above sea level. Before the construction of roads, most of Bhutan's trade came through Paro either from Tibet via Tremo or from the south via Haa. Paro Valley extends from Jumolhari on the Tibetan border to Chuzom, which is the confluence of the Thimphu and Punakha rivers.

Transfer to hotel. Lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon, visit Ta-Dzong (converted into the National Museum in 1968), located on a hill overlooking the Paro Dzong. Dzongs are traditionally built without nails or written plans. The cylindrical building, said to be in the shape of a conch shell, was built in 1656 by Desi Tenzin Drukpa, then Governor of Paro, as a watchtower to look over the Paro Dzong in case of invasions from the north. As was the situation in those days, invasions were common and the Dzong, which was the center of administration in the state, needed to be overlooked by such watchtowers. In its’ day, the building not only housed soldiers but also prisoners of war, mostly invaders.

The necessary infrastructure was created to house some of the finest specimens of Bhutanese art, including masterpieces of bronze statues and paintings gathered from different parts of the country. Suitable galleries were constructed to house the extensive collections. Works of art were elegantly displayed on scientific lines. The handicraft items cover the history and cultural heritage of more than 1500 years. The National Museum has in its possession over 3,000 works of Bhutanese art, rich holdings of various creative traditions and disciplines that represent a remarkable blend of the past with the present and is a major attraction for local and foreign visitors.

After touring the inside, enjoy the view of Paro Valley from the Ta-Dzong.

Next, we visit Paro Dzong- also called Rinchén Pung Dzong / Rinpung Dzong (‘fortress on a heap of jewels’). The Paro Dzong has a long and fascinating history, and is considered to be one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture in the country. The dzong was built in the 16th century on the foundation of a monastery built by Guru Rinpoch on a steep hillside overlooking the valley. It was used on numerous occasions to defend Paro Valley against invasions by Tibet. The Dzong houses a large community of Lamas and a school for novices. It is the administrative seat of Paro.

Unlike most of the other dzongs in Bhutan, it survived the massive 1897 earthquake mostly unscathed, though it was almost burnt to the ground by a fire in 1907. All-important relics were lost to the fire. Nothing could be salvaged except for the Thongdrol, a 20x20 meter-wide Thangka. The Thangka is displayed annually during the Paro Festival in the Spring. The Dzong was however rebuilt the following year.

This evening, explore the town/bazaars independently.

**Oct 5** Day 12: Paro
To beat the crowds and heat, we start at 7 am to Satsam Chorten (15 min drive) for a glorious hike to Tasktsang Monastery.

**Taktsang Lhakhang** (aka “Tiger’s Nest Temple”) is perched on a rock face and is revered by the Bhutanese as Guru Padmasambhava (who introduced Buddhism to Bhutan) is said to have flown on the back of a tiger to the site to meditate.

The climb up to Taktsang takes about two hours. Every Bhutanese hopes to make at least one pilgrimage here in their lifetime. The well-maintained path passes through blue pines, oaks and rhododendrons. From a number of places during the climb you can get glimpses of the monastery, clinging to the cliff with no visible approach.

Near a cluster of prayer flags, to the right of the path, is Taktsang Café, offering a magnificent view of the 3000 foot-high cliff supporting the monastery. Enjoy tea and snacks (or lunch) at the Taktsang café. You can descend from here or continue.

If you decide to go further: Before the final approach, a bend in the road leads down to a small bridge. A few paces ahead is a hermit’s hut carved inside a rock. From here, a short but steep climb takes us to the door of Taktsang. Near the entrance is the cave in which the well-known Guru Rimpoch or Padmasambhava meditated for three months in the 18th century and converted the people to Buddhism.
There is an option to have a pony ride to the view point, which takes approx 1 hour (extra cost/pay direct). Your guide will walk with you alongside the pony. The path to the view point is like a track road with gradual ascent and a mix of mild and steep slopes. The trail is quite wide and can easily accommodate two horses side-by-side. On the return you must walk downhill; the ponies are not permitted to take riders down.

NOTE: Drugyal Dzong – the ruins of the Dzong that defended the valley in the 17th century from Tibetan Invasion; is closed to visitors indefinitely.

On the return to Paro town, we stop at the Kyichu monastery built from the 7th century. This is one of the oldest monasteries in Bhutan built by the great Tibetan King Songsten Gyepo and the main statue is of the Future Buddha, which is similar to the main Buddha statue in the Potala Palace in Lhasa Tibet.

If there were sites not visited yesterday due to time constraints, we shall do so today. Transfer to hotel (15 min’11 km). Rest of day is free.

Oct 6 Day 13: Fly to Bangkok Druk Air dep 1050, arr 1540 OR Fly to Kathmandu KB204, dep 0800, arrive 0845. (flight schedules subject to change). Our representative in Bhutan will accompany you to the airport and offer assistance with check-in.

**Land Tour:** $3585 per person based on min four people. Single room: $550.

**Plus Airfare (estimates):** Bumthang-Paro: $220 per person
Bangkok-Paro-Bangkok: $870 per person OR Kathmandu - Paro-Kathmandu: $470 per person

**If booking Tibet Extension:** you will fly from Paro to Kathmandu.

**Includes:**
- Accommodation (based on availability)
- 12 nights with breakfast, lunch. Dinner
  - Thimphu: 3 nights at Gyelsa Boutique hotel, deluxe rooms [http://www.gyelsaboutique.com/]
  - Punakha: 1 night at Drubchu Resort, superior rooms [https://drubchhu.com/]
  - Gangtey: 2 nights at Hotel Dewachen [https://www.dewachenhospitality.com/hotel/dewachen-hotel-spa/]
  - Trongsa: 1 night at Yangkhil Resort [http://www.yangkhil.bt/]
  - Bumthang: 3 nights at Mountain Lodge Resort [https://bhutanmountainresort.com/]
  - Paro: 2 nights at Hotel Olahang [https://www.bhutanhotels.com.bt/hotels/hotel-olathang/]
- Arrival and departure transfers with assistance from our representative
- Land transport by vehicles no older than 5 years: Scorpio Mahindra (3 people) or Toyota Hiace (seats 12)
- Domestic flight Bumthang to Paro (economy class)
- All sightseeing tours as per the program with professional guide.
- Entrance fees at the monuments as indicated in the program.
- All meals in Bhutan
- Bhutan visa fee
- Bhutan Tourism Development Fee

**Does Not Include:**
- International airfare
- Airfares to/from Paro / Quoted Separately Subject to change]
- Photography charges in the monasteries and monuments
- Refreshments, bottled drinks
- Tips to driver & guide
- Travel Insurance and rescue of any form
- Cost arising out of flight cancellation/road blockades/landslides/riots and events beyond our control
- Expenses of personal nature and any other expenses not mentioned in the above cost

**NOTES:**
- Bhutan Government recently announced that visitors will no longer be allowed access to the lhakhangs (the inner sanctums of the monasteries where the shrines are kept). People are still allowed to enter the monasteries, however.
- Nights in Bhutan can be fairly cold. There is no central heating in Bhutanese standard hotels, though rooms do have heaters. We advise warm clothing and a good attitude!
- Where feasible, an optional short day hike can also be arranged for those interested in greater physical activity.
- The days are quite full. All driving times mentioned are estimates and do not include the time spent sightseeing along the way.
- The sequence of activities may be changed by the guide as you travel. This may be due to logistical reasons such as changes in flight schedules, traffic conditions, weather conditions, or government policies. You will be given a daily briefing of the day’s activities and informed, usually at breakfast, if there are any changes.
- Rest assured our guides are quite experiences and dedicated to giving you a most special experience of Bhutan. In addition, they all undergo basic first aid and CPR training.
- The road expansion project is still underway. Therefore, we can expect uneven roads on the highway with longer driving hours. This is also the reason we now have a flight from Bumthang to Paro rather than driving as in past years.